HARRISON's COLLECTION.

BRITISH CLASSICKS.

SKETCHES;

OR,

ESSAYS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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THE

PREFACE.

THE Author of the following Papers chuſes to call them SKETCHES; as the leaſt imperfect amongſt them is to a laboured treatiſe, what the painter's outlines, or his firſt rude draughts, are to a finiſhed picture. This declaration, he hopes, will be accepted by the proper judges of writing, as a ſufficient apology for any thing, either in thought or expreſſion, that may be found careleſs or incorrect in his ESSAYS. He owns he could have given thoſe little looſe fragments much bolder ſtrokes, as well as more delicate touches: but as an author's renown depends at preſent upon the mobility, he dreads the danger of writing too well; and feels the value of his own labour too ſenſibly, to beſtow it where, in all probability, it might only ſerve to depreciate his performance.

SKETCHES;

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VOLUME THE FIRST.

SKETCH I.

OF LANGUAGE.

ALMOST every one that can read, pretends to judge of the author's ſtyle, as it is called: but how few are there who really know good language from bad! Even the beſt judges are ſometimes divided in their opinions; for want, it would ſeem, of a common ſtandard by which the merits of different languages, as well as different writers in the ſame language, might be compared. If I was to reduce my own private idea of the beſt language to a definition, I ſhould call it the ſhorteſt, cleareſt, and eaſieſt way of expreſſing one's thoughts, by the moſt harmonious arrangement of the beſt choſen words, both for meaning and ſound. The beſt language is ſtrong and expreſſive, without ſtiffneſs or affectation: ſhort and conciſe, without being either obſcure or ambiguous; and eaſy and flowing and diſengaged, without one undetermined or ſuperfluous word.

SKETCH II.

OF GENIUS.

THERE is a ſtandard of right and wrong in the nature of things, of beauty and deformity, both in the natural and moral world. And as different minds happen to be more or leſs exquiſite, the more or leſs ſenſibly do they perceive the various degrees of good and bad, and are the more or leſs ſuſceptible of being charmed with what is right or beautiful, and diſguſted with what is wrong or deformed. It is chiefly this ſenſibility that conſtitutes Genius; to which a ſound head and a good heart are as eſſential as a lively imagination. And a man of true Genius muſt neceſſarily have as exquiſite a feeling of the moral beauties, as of whatever is great or beautiful in the works of nature; or maſterly

maſterly in the arts which imitate nature, in poetry, painting, ſtatuary, and muſic.

On the other ſide, where the heart is very bad, the genius and taſte, if there happen to be any pretenſions to them, will be found ſhocking and unnatural. Nero would be nothing leſs than a poet; but his verſes were what one may call moſt *villainouſly* bad. His taſte of magnificence and luxury was horribly glaring, extravagant, and unnatural, to the laſt degree.

Caligula's taſte was ſo outrageouſly wrong, that he deteſted the works of the ſweet Mantuan poet more paſſionately than ever Mœcenas admired them; and if Virgil had unfortunately lived down to thoſe times in which that monſter appeared, he would probably have been tortured to death for no other crime but that he wrote naturally, and like an honeſt man.

True Genius may be ſaid to conſiſt of a perfect poliſh of ſoul, which receives and reflects the images that fall upon it, without warping or diſtortion. And this fine poliſh of ſoul, is, I believe, conſtantly attended with what philoſophers call the moral truth.

There are minds which receive objects truly, and feel the impreſſions they ought naturally to make, in a very lively manner, but want the faculty of reflecting them; as there are people who, I ſuppoſe, feel all the charms of poetry without being poets themſelves.

SKETCH III.

OF TASTE.

OUR notion of Taſte may be eaſily underſtood by what has been ſaid upon the ſubject of Genius; for mere good Taſte is nothing elſe but genius without the power of execution.

It muſt be born; and is to be improved chiefly by being accuſtomed, and the earlier the better, to the moſt exquiſite objects of Taſte in it's various kinds. For the taſte in writing and painting, and in every thing elſe, is inſenſibly formed upon what we are accuſtomed to; as well as Taſte in eating and drinking. One who from his youth has been uſed to drink nothing but heavy diſmal Port, will not immediately acquire a reliſh for Claret or Burgundy.

In the moſt ſtupid ages there is more good Taſte than one would at firſt ſight imagine. Even the preſent, abuſe it with what contemptuous epithets you pleaſe, cannot be totally void of it. As long as there are noble, humane, and generous diſpoſitions, amongſt mankind, there muſt be good Taſte. For in general, I do not ſay always, the Taſte will be in proportion to thoſe moral qualities and that ſenſibility of mind from which they take their riſe. And while many, amongſt the great and the learned, are allowed to have Taſte for no better reaſon than that it is their own opinion, it is often poſſeſſed by thoſe who are not conſcious of it, and dream as little of pretending to it as to a ſtar and garter. An honeſt farmer, or ſhepherd, who is acquainted with no language but what is ſpoken in his own county, may have a much truer reliſh of the *Engliſh* writers than the moſt dogmatical pedant that ever erected himſelf into a commentator; and from his *Gothic* chair, with an ill-bred arrogance, dictated falſe criticiſm to the gaping multitude.

But even thoſe who are endued with good natural Taſte, often judge implicitly and by rote, without ever conſulting their own Taſte. Inſtances of this paſſive indolence, or rather this unconſciouſneſs of one's own faculties, appear every day; not only in the fine arts, but in caſes where the mere *Taſte*, according to the original meaning of the word, is alone concerned. For I am poſitive there are many thouſands who, if they were to bring their own palate to a ſevere examination, would diſcover that they really find a more delicious flavour in mutton than in veniſon, in flounder than in turbot, and yet prefer middling or bad veniſon to the beſt mutton; that is, what is ſcarceſt and deareſt, and conſequently what is, from the folly of mankind, the moſt in vogue, to what is really the moſt agreeable to their own private taſte.

In matters of Taſte, the public, for the moſt part, ſuffers itſelf to be led by a few who perhaps are really no judges: but who, under the favour of ſome advantages of title, place, or fortune, ſet up for judges, and are implicitly

citly followed even by thoſe who have taſte. Theſe waſhy dictators have learnt at ſchool to admire ſuch authors as have for ages been poſſeſſed of an undiſputed renown: but they would never have been the firſt to have diſcovered ſtrokes of true genius in a cotemporary writer, though they had lived at the court of Auguſtus or of Queen Elizabeth.

So undiſtinguiſhed is our Taſte, that if the moſt torpid dunce this fruitful age can boaſt of, could by ſome artful impoſture prepoſſeſs the public, that the moſt inſipid of all his own bread-ſauce compoſitions, to be publiſhed next winter, was a piece of Milton's, or any other celebrated author, recovered from duſt and obſcurity, it would be received with univerſal applauſe; and perhaps be tranſlated into French before the town had doated ſix weeks upon it. One might venture to ſay too, that if a work of true ſpirit and genius was to be introduced into the world, under the name of ſome writer of low reputation, it would be rejected even by the greateſt part of thoſe who pretend to lead the taſte. And no wonder, while an eminent vintner has miſtaken his own old hock at nine ſhillings the bottle for that at five.

SKETCH IV.

OF TURGID WRITING.

NOISE and bluſter is what paſſes for ſublime with the great majority of readers; and there are people who think nothing can be ſtrong or ſolid but what is clumſey. Yet the genteel dignity of Whitehall, and the elegant cheerful ſimplicity of St. Paul's in Covent Garden, may ſtand as long as that purſe-proud wittol the Treaſury, or even the ſquat ſolidity of the Horſe Guards.

Unnatural, forced, exaggerated ſwelling, whether in ſentiments or language, is owing to falſe taſte and want of true genius. The Hercules of Goltzius is that very ſublime in perſon. It is intended to expreſs the moſt exceſſive robuſtneſs of figure: but the painter, in endeavouring to repreſent the human form in it's utmoſt degree of ſtrength, has aggravated the demi-god into a mere aukward monſter; as ridiculous a giant as either of the brothers at Guildhall.

To take it in another view, that clumſey robuſtneſs of manner, which, by the way, does not partake of true vigour, for that always performs it's buſineſs without ſtraining, is the ſame thing to the ſpirited eaſe which is neceſſary to good writing, that the aukward efforts of a huge, heavy, ill-ſhaped dray-horſe, and a lame one too, are to the eaſy actions of the moſt ſupple Arabian that ever was dreſſed by St. Amour.

That writing can never be very good which is not eaſy; but it does not follow that all eaſy writing is good. Writing may be very eaſy, and yet, Heaven knows, very inſipid. And when you begin to ſuſpect that your writing is eaſy indeed, but wants ſpirit, the wiſeſt thing you can do is to let your pen drop and go to bed.

SKETCH V.

OF AFFECTATION OF WIT, AND FLORID WRITING.

IT is not always ſo eaſy to get rid of an impertinent companion, as of a ſilly book; otherwiſe, to be for ever aiming at Wit, would be as teazing and intolerable in writing as in converſation. Too much even of genuine Wit is cloying, and the vanity of diſplaying it inceſſantly will fatigue and diſguſt every reader whoſe taſte is true. Olives, caveare, anchovies, and Dutch herrings, do very well in their place; but, in the name of all the hoſpitable powers, do not oblige us to dine upon them. Let us firſt lay a foundation of good plain beef or mutton, if you pleaſe: for there is no living upon pickles or ſweetmeats alone.

The ground-work of every performance, even of thoſe which admit or require the greateſt profuſion of ornaments, ought to be plain and ſimple. Obſerve Nature: in the meadow, the

ſweet green, which never dazzles the ſight, is the predominant colour; while the gaudy flowers, red, white, yellow, blue, and purple, are careleſsly interſperſed. This is infinitely more pleaſing and beautiful than that inſipid, childiſh, uncomfortable bauble called a flower-knot; and the wild variety of the woods as far excels the richeſt plantation of flowering ſhrubs. I would not be above taking a hint even from the mechanic arts: if a ſuit of cloaths is overcharged with lace, it becomes tawdry and ungenteel. In every work, the true taſte is to diſpoſe the ornaments with eaſe and propriety, and not to be affectedly or too oſtentatiouſly prodigal of them. By this means you beſtow upon your performance an elegant richneſs, and ſuch a modeſt dignity as will pleaſe every true eye, though it may quite eſcape the notice of the vulgar, and falſe critics of all ranks, who delight in nothing but what is glaring, tawdry, and oſtentatious.—No, I beg their pardon: for they are ſometimes in raptures, or ſeem to be ſo, with what is altogether inſipid.

Let the ornaments be never ſo well executed, if they are not eaſily and naturally introduced, they will have an aukward effect. The moſt beautiful woman may diſguſt you by oſtentation, and a declared intention to charm. As often as it is poſſible to contrive it ſo, the ornaments ſhould be, or at leaſt appear to be, of ſome uſe towards the main deſign of the work: but when they are bluntly produced, and with too barefaced a purpoſe to dazzle or entertain, inſtead of your admiration, they raiſe your contempt. A maſque, a coronation, or a proceſſion upon our ſtage, is, for the moſt part, an inſipid, tawdry, tireſome ſhew. But if it was really an ornament, to introduce it with propriety and grace, it ought to be contrived as an incident to help on the buſineſs of the piece: as in the maſque in Romeo and Juliet; and the funeral proceſſion, ſuch as it is, in Richard the Third; which, notwithſtanding ſome want of *decorum*, as the critics call it, and of probability in the ſcene, has ſtill ſome kind of pretence to aſſiſt in the buſineſs of the fable.

To conclude: the ornamental parts of a work coſt the leaſt trouble to a writer who has any luxuriance of imagination. To ſupport the plain parts with an eaſy dignity, ſo as they ſhall neither become flat on the one hand, nor diſguſtingly ſtiff on the other, is a much more difficult taſk. And yet, if you ſucceed never ſo well here, you will receive little thanks from the generality of readers; who will be apt to imagine they could eaſily perform the ſame kind of work themſelves, till they come to try it.

SKETCH VI.

OF OBSCURE WRITING.

AS the firſt end of all writing and ſpeaking is to be underſtood, it ſeems to follow, that Obſcurity muſt be the greateſt fault in either. One would think it needleſs to inſiſt upon this; yet there are readers ſo abſurd as to admire an author the more for every now and then plunging into the unintelligible: as a daſh of myſtery procures more reverence from weak minds to any ſcheme of religion, than it's moſt virtuous or moſt rational precepts. Some clumſey ſcholars too, who muſt needs be making aukward love to the ſcornful Muſes, and tumbling them with their coarſe paws; when they come to an obſcure paſſage in an author, whom they are determined to admire, tell us we muſt not always expect the ſame clearneſs in writers of the firſt claſs as in the more inferior ones. Such is their cant even in talking of dramatic writing, in which Obſcurity is more unpardonable than almoſt in any other kind of production. But the dulleſt and moſt ſhallow of thoſe critics could write obſcurely himſelf; and if he writes much, he muſt have *ill luck* not to do it ſometimes. For to write obſcurely requires no other talent or ſkill than to expreſs one's meaning imperfectly; or if that is not enough, to write without any meaning at all. However, amongſt a different kind of critics, perſpicuity has always been reckoned an eſſential quality to good writing; and if ſometimes a great author is found deficient in this article, it only ſhews how difficult it is to expreſs ſome things with clearneſs and eaſe. For one may very ſafely preſume that no good writer, where it was prudent to ſpeak out, ever expreſſed himſelf obſcurely from choice.

SKETCH

SKETCH VII.

OF THE MODERN ART OF SPELLING.

AN author ſeems reduced to great extremities, who flies to new Spelling to diſtinguiſh himſelf.

Theſe innovations are pedantic and conceited trifles; and the beſt, or rather the only good reaſon for ever altering a long eſtabliſhed Spelling, is, that the writing may come the nearer to the pronunciation. But our reformers in the art of Spelling, who at preſent chiefly confine themſelves to one claſs of words, to ſubſtantive nouns and verbs derived from the Latin, ſuch as *honour*, *favour*, *labour*, while they write *honor*, *favor*, *labor*, increaſe the diſtance between the writing and pronunciation, or rather they produce one where there was none before; for the *u* in all theſe words, except in a few where it is generally omitted in the common ſpelling, as *horror*, *terror*, is at leaſt as much felt in the pronunciation as the retained vowel *o*. Some have, unhappily enough, ſubjected to the ſame innovation other words, which contain the diphthong *ou*, though they have no relation at all to the Latin, and write, *endeavor*, *neighbor*, *behavior*. Why don't they proſcribe this hated *u* in *adjectives* too; and inſtead of *invidious*, *odious*, *glorious*, write *invidios*, *odios*, *glorios*? As they have gone ſo far, I can ſee no good reaſon why they ſhould ſtop ſhort here.

Trifles betray the character: and it is ſomewhat ſtrange, if it has eſcaped the penetration of thoſe philoſophers who have employed part of their talents in characteriſing the age, that there hardly needed any other inſtance to diſtinguiſh the preſent as an *unmanly* one than this very averſion to the honeſt vowel *u*; without whoſe aſſiſtance it would be impoſſible to pronounce ſome of the moſt important and moſt intereſting words, to any thing of a man, in the whole Engliſh language. And it is not unworthy our obſervation here, that a late noble Author, whoſe parts were manly enough in the earlier days of his life, did not begin to *caſtigate* his Spelling after this manner, till he was conſiderably advanced in years.

SKETCH VIII.

OF NEW WORDS.

IT is the eaſieſt thing imaginable to coin words. The moſt ignorant of the mobility are apt to do it every day, and are laughed at for it. What beſt can juſtify the introducing a new Word is neceſſity, where there is not an eſtabliſhed one to expreſs your meaning. But while all the world underſtands what is meant by the word *pleaſure*, which ſounds very well too, what occaſion can there be for ſaying *volupty* *?

Nothing can deform a language ſo much as an inundation of new words and phraſes. It is, indeed, the readieſt way to demoliſh it. If there is any need to illuſtrate the barbarous effects which a mixture of new words muſt produce, only conſider how a diſcourſe, patched all over with ſentences in different languages, would ſound; or how oddly it would ſtrike you in a ſerious converſation to hear, from the ſame perſon, a mixture of all the various dialects and tones of the ſeveral counties and ſhires of the three kingdoms: though it is ſtill the ſame language. To make it ſenſible to the eye; how greatly would a mixture of Roman, Italick, Greek, and Saxon characters, deform a page? A picture, imitating the ſtyle of different maſters, which is commonly called a Gallery of Painters, can never be pleaſing for the ſame reaſons, want of union and harmony.

The preſent licentious humour of coining and borrowing words, ſeems to portend no good to the Engliſh language: and it is grievous to think with what *vo-*

* See ſome poſthumous works of a right honourable Author, publiſhed not many years ago in *defence* of our holy religion.

lupty two or *poetararorencouroac* * eminent perſonages have *opiniatred* the *inchoation* of ſuch *futile* barbariſms.

In ſhort, the liberty of coining words ought to be uſed with great modeſty. Horace, they ſay, gave but two, and Virgil only one to the Latin tongue, which was ſqueamiſh enough not to ſwallow thoſe, even from ſuch hands, without ſome reluctance.

I cannot conclude without putting our writers and ſpeakers in mind of an excellent advice from Mr. Pope, on this ſubject of new and old words:

Be not the firſt by whom the new are tried,
Nor yet the laſt to lay the old aſide †.

SKETCH IX.

OF SUPERANNUATED WORDS.

INSTEAD of creating a parcel of aukward new words, I imagine it would be an improvement to degrade many of the old ones from their peerage. I am but a private man, and without authority; but an abſolute prince, if he was of my opinion, would make it capital ever to ſay *encroach* or *encroachment*, or any thing that belongs to *encroaching*. I would commit *inculcate*, for all it's Latinity, to the care of the paviours; and it ſhould never appear above ground again. If you have the leaſt ſympathy with the human ear, never ſay *purport* while you breathe; nor *betwixt*, except you have firſt repeated *between* till we are quite tired of it. *Methinks* ſtrongly reſembles the broken language of a German in his firſt attempts to ſpeak Engliſh. *Methought* lies under the ſame objection, but it ſounds better.

It is full time that *froward* ſhould be turned out of all good company, eſpecially as *perverſe* is ready at hand to ſupply his place. *Vouchſafe* is a very civil gentleman; but as his courteſy is ſomewhat old faſhioned, we wiſh he would *deign* or *condeſcend*, or *be pleaſed* to retire.

From what rugged road, I wonder, did *ſwerve deviate* into the Engliſh language?—But this *ſubject matter!*—In the name of every thing that is diſguſting and deteſtable, what is it? Is it one or two ugly words? What is the meaning of it? Confound me if ever I could gueſs! Yet one dares hardly ever peep into a preface, for fear of being ſtared in the face with this naſty *ſubject matter*.

Wittol is an old-faſhioned, ill-ſounding word; but as there is frequent occaſion for it, and no other word ſo perfectly expreſſes it's meaning, we cannot afford to part with it.

But to pick out all the aukward old words, which continue to be as current amongſt us as the worn-out ſixpences, it would be neceſſary to peruſe the dictionary from A to Z. A moſt deſperate uncomfortable labour! As heart-breaking a taſk as it would be to wade through half a volume of the *Statutes at Large*; nay, by Heaven! I would almoſt as ſoon take it upon me to read the moſt inſipid tragedy that has been brought upon the ſtage theſe ſeven years. But if one could ſubmit to this labour, and ſhould preſume to ſet a mark upon every word one did not reliſh, there may be people of a different opinion; and no private perſon has authority enough to prohibit the uſe of any word, if he finds it ever ſo intolerable to his own ear. For my part, I ſhall endeavour to paſs through life as inoffenſively as poſſible, both to the world and my own conſcience; and hope, and pray, I may never be reduced to the neceſſity of uſing

One *word*, which dying, I would wiſh to blot‡

* The word for the number *three*, in one of the American languages; which, to judge by this ſpecimen, cannot be barbarous for want of polyſyllables.

† See Mr. Pope's Eſſay on Criticiſm.

‡ See the Epilogue to Mr. Thomſon's Coriolanus.

SKETCH X.

OF MUSIC.

MUSIC, I preſume, can no further be properly called one of the imitative arts, than as it expreſſes the Paſſions; and in this reſpect only can be admitted as the ſiſter of Poetry and Painting. So that mere harmony has little pretenſion to ſuch an alliance; for it is no more muſic than mere verſification is poetry.

The Italian compoſitions, for the moſt part, mean nothing beyond harmonious ſound; and are as much inferior to what ever is truly pathetic in Muſic, as a tragedy, which depends upon noiſe and ſhew, is to a plain paſſionate one, which repreſents a natural and moving picture of life, and of the human mind. A family piece, even ſuch a one as the celebrated work of Vandyke at Wilton; where, though the drawing is exact, and the attitudes eaſy and natural, the figures are all gaping and unemployed; is a mighty tame performance when compared with a grand hiſtory by Raphael, Rubens, or the ſame Vandyke himſelf, where every thing is expreſſive, warm, paſſionate, and intereſting.

But it is not even mere harmony; difficulty of execution is the ſublime, at which the greateſt part of our modern maſters aſpire; as if it required the leaſt genius either to compoſe or execute difficult muſic. While theſe are the objects of emulation amongſt our compoſers and performers, the opera is likely to *continue* a moſt raviſhing entertainment.

We run mad, or rather fooliſh, after this imported muſic; while we have much better of our own. Moſt of the modern Italian compoſitions only trifle with the ear; the Welch, the Scotch, the Iriſh muſic, reaches the heart. The productions of our preſent Italian maſters are thrummed over for a ſeaſon, becauſe they are new; and forgot for ever afterwards, becauſe when you have heard them twenty times, you find them ſtill as inſipid as at firſt. The muſic, which charmed theſe iſlands long before the boaſted revival of this art it Italy, or rather in Flanders, is as eſtabliſhed as the ancient claſſics; and thoſe compoſitions, ſhort and ſimple as they are, never become thread-bare, but give delight and rapture every time they are heard.

There is a certain reſemblance of air between the muſic of the ancient Britons, the Iriſh, and the Scotch; and yet they are all very diſtinguiſhable from one another. There is a remarkable difference of character even between the muſic of the north and the ſouth of Scotland. The northern is generally martial, for the moſt part melancholy, and bears a ſtrong reſemblance to the Iriſh: the ſouthern is paſtoral and amorous, with ſuch an air of tender melancholy, as love and ſolitude, in a wild romantic country, are apt to inſpire. Each of them has a wildneſs peculiar to itſelf. The wild ſpirit of the ſouth breathes a ſweeter air of rural ſolitude; that of the north is more ſolemn, and ſometimes what one might almoſt call dreadful. Beſides, the gay ſprightly airs which each of them has produced, are in as different ſtyles as the genius and manners of the people in the two extremities of Scotland, or the face of the countries they inhabit; both of which are wild, but I believe, with a very different air.

The Britiſh poetry is univerſally allowed, by the beſt judges of both, to be much ſuperior to the Italian; and why ſhould you wonder to find the muſic of the one country brought into competition with that of the other? The muſic of theſe iſlands ſeem to agree in character with that of the ancients; which, from the accounts we have of it, excelled in ſimplicity and paſſion. How ſimple the muſic muſt have been that delighted Greece in the days of Alcæus, Sappho, Pindar, and Anacreon, ſeems to appear from the very make of their capital inſtrument the Lyre.

SKETCH XI.

OF ENGLISH VERSE.

RHYME, we have often been told, is a modern invention; though, if that was a crime, it might perhaps be proved to be not ſo very modern either. It is reckoned a barbarous one by ſome pedants; who finding, I ſuppoſe, from the opinion of better judges than themſelves, that it is abominable in Greek and Latin, conclude that it muſt not be leſs ſo in French and in Engliſh. The contrary is evident to every one that has ears, and dares think for himſelf: for in Engliſh, rhyme is capable of much harmony; and the French can have no verſification without it. But ſome people, who ought to know better, ſeem to make no allowance for the original deference between one language and another; and are ready to quarrel with the Engliſh as a barbarous language, becauſe it is not Latin or Greek. They do not conſider that every language has powers and graces peculiar to itſelf; and that what is becoming in one would be quite ridiculous in another. Of this it is ſufficient to produce one obvious example: the tranſpoſition of words, which gives ſuch a grace and ſpirit to the Greek and Latin languages, and without which they would become deteſtably flat and inſipid, does not at all ſuit the genius of the Engliſh; except ſometimes in poetry: and, by the way, I am afraid there are too may ungraceful tranſpoſitions current amongſt our Engliſh poets.

But it is not only a few obſcure pedants who are thus diſſatisfied with their mother-tongue; and would be glad for it's improvement to torture it from it's native ſhape, ſome into Latin, and others into French; for attempts of this nature have been actually made by men of ſuperior note. Sir Philip Sidney, who, notwithſtanding his affected manner, muſt be allowed to have poſſeſſed a great ſhare of genius, would every now and then ſpur up his gallant Engliſh into a moſt unbecoming ridiculous trot after the Greek and Latin hexameters. It is certainly impoſſible to introduce the Greek and Latin meaſures into Engliſh poetry with any ſucceſs; yet Sir Philip was fond of this project, and purſued it with a ſtrange obſtinacy. He recommended it to Spenſer; but Spenſer had too true an ear to reliſh ſuch aukward unnatural verſification, or countenance it by his example. At leaſt their is nothing remains of him to ſhew that he ever practiſed it. There have been attempts made ſince to the ſame purpoſe by Milton and ſome later authors. But there never was any thing ſeen ſo ungraceful, or ſo deſpicably pedantic, as all eſſays of that kind which have hitherto appeared. I do not know that it has ever yet been tried, except by Milton in ſome parts of his Samſon; but of all the Greek or Latin meaſures, the Iambic ſeems the moſt capable of being adopted into the Engliſh poetry.

I have either read or heard that a poet of the laſt century, whom I ſhall not name, becauſe I am not perfectly ſure of the fact, pretended to ſome ſecrets in veſification, which he did not chuſe to communicate. If it was ſo, it ſhewed a jealouſy unworthy of ſo great a maſter of numbers: he might ſafely enough, for his own ſuperiority, have publiſhed thoſe ſecrets, whatever they were; for it is impoſſible they could ever be of much uſe. He could eaſily adviſe you to vary your pauſes, and tell you which are the moſt graceful: but theſe and all ſuch precepts are nothing to the purpoſe; a good ear will naturally produce harmony without the leaſt regard or attention to rules; and there is no cure for a bad one. The only way to improve the ear, whether good or bad, is to accuſtom it to the moſt harmonious writing.

Blank verſe admits of a greater variety of pauſes than rhyme, and is partly for that reaſon the fitteſt for works of any conſiderable length. But in Engliſh poetry I queſtion whether it is poſſible, with any ſucceſs, to write odes, epiſtles, elegies, paſtorals, or ſatires, without rhyme. And it happens luckily, that in theſe ſhort pieces the ear has not time to be tired with the return of the chimes: which, in my humble opinion, had better ſometimes play a little falſe to one another than be for ever ſcrupulouſly exact; provided ſuch licences never ſhock the ear.

It does not require a very exquiſite

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ear to write too ſmooth or even harmonious lines running: yet in rhyme, a poet, who is always very careful to poliſh his couplet, may paſs with the multitude for a great maſter in verſification. But as long as his harmony is confined within ſuch narrow bounds, he writes but like a ſchool-boy, who keeps in the line only with the help of ruled paper.

Dr. Swift and Mr. Pope took offence, one does not know why, at the triplet, and very rarely condeſcended to admit it into their verſe. It is true, it had been uſed to a nauſeous exceſs by ſome taſteleſs writers; and Mr. Pope's own imitation of Rocheſter might juſtly enough give him a diſguſt to the triplet for his whole life. Yet it contributes not a little to the grace of Dryden's verſification: and I can ſee no reaſon why it ſhould be prohibited now; as it gives a variety to the numbers, which in rhyme are ſufficiently limited to require ſuch a help: beſides, it may often be in your power, by it's means, to compreſs within three lines what muſt otherwiſe ſtraggle into four, and of courſe become languid and ſpiritleſs.

Variety is the ſoul of verſification; and the march of the lines ought to be adapted to the ſubject. The meaſure is the ſame in both; but had Horace wrote his epiſtles or ſatires in the ſame kind of numbers with Virgil's Æneid, it would have been a monſtrous impropriety; like hunting the fox or hare on a war-horſe, with the equipage of a general at a review, or on the day of battle. He knew very well that, in familiar writing, dignity of verſification would be quite ridiculous. Accordingly in thoſe parts his numbers are looſe, rambling, and often almoſt proſaic. But in his moſt careleſs and licentious periods he ſeldom or never hurts the ear: and as often as there is any thing great in his ſentiment, his expreſſion and numbers riſe in proportion, and ſuſtain themſelves with a native unaffected dignity; till without falling he deſcends on eaſy and dextrous wings to the familiar again.

It does not ſeem quite foreign to the preſent ſubject to take ſome notice of a certain French author, who, after having given it as his opinion, that Mr. Pope *is the moſt harmonious of all the Engliſh poets*, adds, with a very plauſible aſſurance, that *he has reduced the ſharp hiſſings of the Engliſh trumpet to the ſweet ſounds of the flute* *. It is no great wonder, that one who is apt to write much at random, ſhould preſume to talk ſo contemptuouſly of a manly, an elegant, and harmonious language, with which he plainly appears to have but a very ſuperficial acquaintance. But who ever talked before of the *hiſſings of a trumpet* —or of *ſharp hiſſings?* We have all heard of the *hoarſe trumpet*, but the *hiſſing trumpet* is an inſtrument with which we are not yet acquainted. However, to paſs theſe little improprieties, this compliment to Mr. Pope ſhews how well this critic is qualified to pronounce ſentence upon the Engliſh poets. No one is more ſenſible than I am of Mr. Pope's merit; but his blindeſt admirer might ſtartle at the preference beſtowed upon him here. For, not to mention the great names of Spenſer, Shakeſpeare, and Milton, upon ſuch an [illegible] us only compare Mr. Pope in this point of view with a writer upon whom, as they ſay, he formed himſelf, and whom not only in his own opinion, but in that of many others, he is thought to have excelled in the art of verſifying. It is almoſt needleſs, after this, to ſay that I mean Dryden; whoſe verſification I take to be the moſt muſical that has yet appeared in rhyme. Round, ſweet, pompous, ſpirited, and various; it flows with ſuch a happy volubility, ſuch an animated and maſterly negligence, as I am afraid will not ſoon be excelled. From the fineneſs of his ear, his proſe too is perhaps the ſweeteſt, the moſt mellow and generous, that the Engliſh language has yet produced.

Had Mr. Voltaire known as much of the Engliſh poets as he pretends to do, he might have found ſomething like the *ſweet ſound of the flute* in Mr. Waller; who wrote before Mr. Pope was born. Mr. Voltaire, before he preſumed to compare the Engliſh poets, ſhould have known, that before Mr. Waller appeared, there was one Edmund Spenſer a poet, whoſe verſe was not merely indolently ſmooth, but ſpirited alſo and harmonious. And if Mr. Voltaire was

* Mr. Pope—Eſt, je crois, le poete le plus elegant, le plus correct, et ce qui eſt encore beaucoup, le plus harmonieux qu' ait en l'Angleterre. Il a reduit les ſifflemens aigres de la trompette Angloiſe au ſons doux de la flute. VOLTAIRE—*Lettres ſur les Anglois.*

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a perfect and a candid judge in this case, he would own, that there was more harmony in many of the English poets —much more than the French language can attain to, or an ear debauched by the French versification is capable of relishing.

SKETCH XII.

OF THE VERSIFICATION OF ENGLISH TRAGEDY.

THE greatest part of our modern writers of Tragedy seem to think it enough to write mere blank verse; no matter however hard it be, however void of swelling and harmony. Even those of them who write the best numbers, study to be solemn and pompous throughout, and affect a monotony of heroic Versification, from the first appearance of the heroine with her confidante, to her last fatal exit; without the least regard to the variety of passions, which express themselves in quick or slow, flowing or interrupted, in languishing or impetuous movements.

The proper Versification of English Tragedy is most certainly blank verse; but as different from the solemn and majestic movement of heroic poetry as the Iambic is from the Hexameter. What a monstrous production would a Greek or Latin tragedy in hexameter verse appear! The ancients found the grave Iambic their proper measure for tragedy; as it is at the same time capable of all the dignity which that kind of poem requires, and descends with the greatest ease to the level of prose and conversation. Such as is the Iambic in Latin, is blank verse in English: but by no means the blank verse of Paradise Lost.

The numbers ought to be accommodated to the passion: and though in some parts of tragedy it is proper they should be slow, or solemn, or languishing, they ought for the most part to run somewhat rambling and irregular; and often rapid and subsultory, so as to imitate the natural cadence and quick turns of conversation.

Shakespeare, who I will venture to say had the most musical ear of all the English poets, is abundantly irregular in his Versification: but his wildest licences seldom hurt the ear; on the contrary, they give his verse a spirit and variety, which prevents it's ever cloying. Our modern tragedy-writers, instead of using the advantages of their own language, seem in general to imitate the monotony of the French Versification: and the only licence they ever venture upon, is that poor tame one, the supernumerary syllable at the end of a line; which they are apt to manage in such a manner as to give their verse a most ungraceful halt. But it is not want of ear alone which makes our common manufacturers of tragedy so insipidly solemn and so void of harmony: it is want of feeling. For let the ear be what it will, if the passions are warmly felt, they will naturally express themselves in their proper tones.

Tragedy requires a greater variety of numbers than any other poetical productions; as it is the most agitated with different passions. The march of every poem of any considerable length, but chiefly of tragedy, ought to resemble the course of a river through a large extent of country diversified with plains, hills, and mountains. The stream, according as the ground lies through which it flows, is either slow, smooth, and solemn; or brisk and sportful; or rapid, impetuous, and precipitate. Such and so various ought to be the Versification of tragedy; instead of that stiff affected importance of movement, which is now absurdly and aukwardly supported through the whole course of these sublime performances.

But besides this studied dignity; this inflexible gravity of pace; this unvaried exactness of measure without spirit or harmony; this immoveable hardness and want of fluctuation in the lines; there is no language so unnatural as that you meet with in most of our modern tragedies. The characters they represent are too heroic, it would seem, and too much exalted above common life, to speak *after the manner of men*. The misfortune is, most of our tragedy-writers labour with all their might, and keep themselves perpetually upon the rack, to say every thing poetically: for

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it never enters into their head, that the moſt natural is the moſt poetical way of ſaying common things; except ſometimes where you can properly raiſe your expreſſion by an eaſy metaphor. Let the ſentiments be ſuch as beſt ſuit the character and ſituation, and they cannot be expreſſed with too much plainneſs and ſimplicity, provided all vulgariſms are as much as poſſible avoided.

As to the Characters; if it was not for a very few exceptions, one would think the art of drawing them was loſt amongſt our dramatic writers. Thoſe that appear in moſt of our modern plays, tragedies call them, or comedies, are like bad portraits; which indeed repreſent the human features, but without life or meaning; or thoſe diſtinguiſhing ſtrokes which, in the incomparable Hogarth, and in every great hiſtory painter, make you imagine you have ſeen ſuch perſons as appear in the picture. In ſhort, thoſe mechanical performances are as imperfect as unnatural repreſentations of human life, of the manners and paſſions of mankind, as the Gothic knights which lie along in armour in the Temple church are of the human figure.

SKETCH XIII.

OF IMITATION.

THE humble vanity, as one may call it, of imitating another perſon's manner, is one great ſource of affectation; which is generally ridiculous, and always diſagreeable. A perſon whoſe natural turn is genteel, if he keeps good company, will inſenſibly acquire as much of their manner as becomes him; but if he ſets up any one as a pattern to be exactly imitated, his behaviour will grow conſtrained, ſtiff, and affected. Such will be the conſtant ſucceſs of ſo abſurd an attempt to confine the variety of nature; which plainly intends that mankind ſhould be diſtinguiſhable one from another by their air, voice, and manner, no leſs than by their faces.

A poet, a painter, or a player, that imitates cloſely, will never excel; and this will hold good in every thing elſe that belongs to genius. It is true, that education and ſtudy are neceſſary to the improvement of genius: but to this purpoſe it is ſufficient to be familiarly acquainted with the greateſt maſters; and the earlier in life the better. By this means, if you delight in them, and have any ſimilarity with them, you will catch their graces without affecting it; and your own original characteriſtical manner will ſtill diſtinguiſh itſelf. But if you ſtudy to form yourſelf upon them, you become only a copy of a copy. The greateſt of them excel by their happy ſkill in copying nature: and if you content yourſelf with ſervilely copying them without drawing immediately from the common ſubject *nature*; you will always be inferior to your original, and have no chance ever to produce any thing great or ſtriking.

In the mean time, I do not imagine that true genius was ever much hurt by imitating. For though it is natural for young people to imitate a favourite author at firſt, it is not probable that true genius will ſubmit to be ſo fettered long.

SKETCH XIV.

OF WRITING TO THE TASTE OF THE AGE.

WHATEVER ſome have pretended, one may reaſonably enough doubt whether ever an author wrote much below himſelf from any cauſe but the neceſſity of writing too faſt. When this happens to a writer who, with the advantages of leiſure and eaſy circumſtances, is capable of producing ſuch works as might charm ſucceeding ages, it is a diſgrace to the nation and the times wherein ſuch a genius had the misfortune to appear.

It belongs to true genius to indulge it's own humour; to give a looſe to it's own ſallies; and to be curbed, reſtrained, and directed, by that ſound judgment alone which neceſſarily attends it. It belongs to it to improve and correct the public taſte; not to humour or meanly proſtitute itſelf to the groſs or low taſte which it finds. And you may depend upon it, that whatever author labours to accommodate himſelf to the taſte of his age—ſuppoſe it, if you pleaſe, this preſent age—the fickly wane, the impotent decline of the eighteenth century; which from a hopeful boy became a moſt inſignificant man; and, for any thing that appears at preſent, will die a very fat drowſy blockhead, and be damned to eternal infamy and contempt: every ſuch author, I ſay, though he may thrive as far as an author can in the preſent age, will by degrees languiſh into obſcurity in the next. For though naked and bare-faced vanity; though an active exertion of little arts, and the moſt unremitting perſeverance in them; though party, cabal, and intrigue; though accidental advantages, and even whimſical circumſtances; may conſpire to make a very moderate genius the idol of the implicit multitude: works that lean upon ſuch fickle props, that ſtand upon ſuch a falſe foundation, will not be long able to ſupport themſelves againſt the injuries of time. Such buildings begin to totter almoſt as ſoon as their ſcaffolding is ſtruck.

But if you find it neceſſary to comply with the humour of your age, the writing beſt calculated to pleaſe a falſe taſte, is what has ſomething of the air of good writing, without being really ſo. For to the vulgar eye the ſpecious is more ſtriking than the genuine. The beſt writing is apt to be too plain, too ſimple, too unaffected, and too delicate, to ſtir the callous organs of the generality of critics, who ſee nothing but the tawdry glare of tinſel; and are deaf to every thing but what is ſhockingly noiſy to a true ear. They are ſtruck with the fierce glaring colours of Old Frank; with attitudes and expreſſions violent, diſtorted and unnatural: while the true, juſt and eaſy, the graceful, the moving, the ſublime repreſentations of Raphael, have not the leaſt power to attract them. The bullying, noiſy march in Judas Macchabees, has perhaps more ſincere admirers than that moſt pathetic one in Saul: and in converſation pertneſs and mere vivacity is more felt by the general run of company than eaſy unaffected wit; as flaſhy, bouncing, flatulent cyder, boaſts of more ſpirit than the ſtill vigour of reſerved Madeira.

But the eaſieſt, as well as the moſt effectual, way of writing to the bad taſte of your age, is to ſet out while your genius is yet upon a level with it. Accordingly, if you have a ſon who begins to diſplay a hopeful bloom of imagination, be ſure to publiſh, with all the advantages that can be procured, the very firſt eſſays of his genius. They will hardly be too good to pleaſe; and, beſides, they have a chance to be received with particular favour and admiration, as the productions of a young muſe. When he has thus taken poſſeſſion of the public ear, he may venture, as his genius ripens, to do his beſt; he may write as well as he can, perhaps without much danger of ſinking in reputation. The renown of his firſt crude eſſays will be ſufficient to prejudice the mobility, great and ſmall in favour of the moſt exquiſite pieces he can produce afterwards. But if he muſt live by his wit, the beſt thing you can do for him is to tranſplant him, as early as poſſible, to Paris; where, in the worſt of days, in the moſt Gothic muſe-deteſting age, there is ſtill ſome ſhelter afforded to the moſt delicate as well as the moſt uncommon flower that bloſſoms in the human mind. In that gay, ſerene and genial climate, the Muſes are ſtill more or leſs cultivated, though not with the ſame ardour and paſſion in every age; as appears from the following paſſage tranſlated from a French author *, who wrote about the beginning of the preſent century. 'Almoſt 'all the arts have in their turns expe-'rienced that diſguſt and love of change 'which is natural to mankind. But I 'don't know that any one of them has 'felt it more than Poetry; which in 'ſome ages has been exalted to a tri-'umphal height, in others neglected, 'diſcouraged, and deſpiſed. About ſixty 'years ago, under the adminiſtration of 'one of the greateſt geniuſes that ever

* Defenſe de la Poeſie; par M. l'Abbé Meſſieu. *Memoirs de Literature, Tome 2dne.*

'France

'France produced, poetry found itself amongst us at it's highest pitch of glory. Those who cultivated the Muses were regarded with particular favour: this art was the road to fortune and dignified stations. But in these days this ardour seems to be considerably abated. We do not appear to be extremely sensible to poetical merit, &c.'

SKETCH XV.

OF PHYSIOGNOMY, OR THE SIMILITUDE BETWEEN THE PERSON AND THE MIND.

THAT the face is a false glass, is a vulgar error, and seems to have taken it's rise from a few exceptions: for all mankind are so much physiognomists, that whoever happens to find himself mistaken, though but for once, joins the cry of the proverb. All are not alike skilled in faces, any more than in unravelling of characters; even the most penetrating eye may be mistaken: yet I will presume to say, that the face is seldom a false glass; and when it proves so, it is generally the fault of the beholder. Perhaps indeed Nature has made some cheats, some to appear worse, many much better, than they are. This is of a piece with her usual variety, and was perhaps partly intended to check the presumption of mankind in judging too rashly of one another. Yet still the face is not a false glass. On the contrary, where the qualities of the mind are eminent, it generally shews them. For the features of the mind commonly follow those of the face; as the figure of most animals, whose characters are strong, is expressive of their nature. Though you had never heard of a lion, a tiger, a serpent, or an alligator, it is natural to think you would at the first sight be afraid of them rather than of a hare, or even a horse, whose appearance might prove formidable, but more from his size than his make.

The mind is for the most part visible in the person. Thus, a bearish figure is almost certainly the rhind or husk of a rude rough soul, never to be polished by any cultivation. If you find any sweetness in the kernel of such a rugged shell, it is more than you ought to expect; for a man is one thing, and a chesnut another. The voice too is in general harsh or sweet, conformably to the features; and where faces resemble one another, you will perceive a remarkable similitude in the voice.

Sense and virtue are often to be found under a plain face and clumsey figure; but elegance and delicacy of mind generally appear in the person. Where a false and specious elegance appears in the face, you may expect the same in the mind; and the herd of mankind will admire them more than the true. Sometimes you meet with a delicate and elegant mind under a face that cannot properly be called handsome: but then you will generally observe a spirit and expression in such a face that pleases a true eye much more than mere regular beauty; for the best part of beauty is air, meaning, and expression.

The ancient Greeks, besides their being the most ingenious and elegant, were the most beautiful race of mortals that ever appeared in the world. The modern Greeks preserve the fine mould of their ancestors; and, if they were blest with liberty, would probably in a short time exceed all their neighbours in every excellence that human nature can boast of, whether ornamental or solid. Exquisite organs are, I believe, for the most part, beautiful too; and it is better to have a handsome ear than a very large one; though the latter is by the laws of the animal œconomy more favourably contrived for the over hearing of a whisper.

It is a common observation that the painter constantly draws the finest *hands* whose own is of an elegant make. This is universally ascribed to a cause which is perhaps more obvious and plausible than true: for the painter often draws a hand in attitudes in which he never sees his own. It was probably more owing to something within themselves, than to the different stiles of nature to which they are accustomed, that Rubens and Raphael are so different in their ideas of beauty, and their representations of the human form. Vandyke studied under Rubens; and as he lived in the same country, was accustomed to the same

kind of objects with his master: yet their works are as different as their persons were; the one robust, but rather clumsey; the other handsome and genteel. In short, the productions of the genius seem to be a kind of propagation, and bear a family resemblance to the parent.

SKETCH XVI.

OF PREJUDICES, POLITICAL, RELIGIOUS, OR NATIONAL.

THIS ungenerous spirit, these ill-natured humours only, are so extremely absurd, that if strong instances of them were not seen every day, it would be impossible for a man of sense to believe them. For my own part, if I am totally free from any of the common weaknesses of mankind, I take it to be this. What is it to me what any man's principles are as to religion or government? He has perhaps as good a right as I, perhaps a better, to keep steady to the principles in which he was educated. My religion may, for want of early instruction, appear as strange to him as his can to me. These things are all merely accidental and the effect of education: for a hot headed churchman, bred at any Protestant university, or the foureſt Christian that ever dissented from the orthodox church of England, would have been as violent a Mahometan, if he had received his system of religion from the Mufti at Constantinople. Can it be supposed, that Heaven puts itself at the head of any religious party!—I humbly think it appears plainly enough, that the Almighty, who displays such infinite variety in all his works, no more intended that all mankind should be of the same religion, than that they should be all of one colour, speak the same language, observe the same customs, and wear the same dress: and it is not less reasonable than charitable to believe, that the virtuous of all religions are equally acceptable to the universal Father. For little as we know of Heaven, I hope we may, without any blasphemy, presume that the superior powers are at least as reasonable as the best of *us*.

It is still not quite out of nature for people in certain humours, whether from the wine or the weather, to grow sour to one another for matters of mere opinion: nay, and proceed to downright quarrelling, either for the glory of God or their own vanity. But the utmost effort of narrow-thinking, and what appears perfectly astonishing, is the aversion which some people bear in their minds to all those who did not happen to be born on the same spot, in the same little island, or the same corner of an island with themselves. Good God! would you have all the world to have been born in Ireland? In the name of every thing that is whimsical, what does it signify where a man was born? Can it be either a merit or a crime, an honour or a disgrace, to have been born in any particular spot of this globe; were it in St. Giles's, the Old Bailey, or even within the execrable walls of Newgate itself? One would think they must be at a prodigious loss for something to value themselves upon, who are proud of the place of their birth. Most people pretend to laugh at what is called family pride: and yet, though according to nice herald-like ceremony, the son, as the better gentleman, ought to take the wall of the father; this kind of pride is perhaps not quite a proper object of ridicule: for whoever esteems himself upon account of his noble ancestry, must of course emulate their virtues, and be afraid to violate their memory by any action unworthy of them. It is needless, and might be mistaken for flattery, to produce the many shininig examples of this generous emulation which adorn the present age. Even without any very distinguishing merit of his own, the son has often some claim to a favourable reception for the sake of his father. But he stands upon a very bleak situation who has nothing to shelter him from contempt but the name of his country. For Heaven's sake, what country is it the most honourable to have been born in? What climate? What latitude? Under the Equator? Or what particular distance from it? I hope it is not in those climates where the weather is the finest, and the seasons the most agreeable. But is there a country, at least in Christendom, where the generality of the people, rough as they run, are not as stupid and as wicked as the arch enemy of mankind would wish to make them? The great

bulk

bulk of the Iriſh, I am ſorry to ſay it, are bad enough, very ragged cattle indeed; it is in vain to deny it. The general run of the Scotch, as well as of the French, Spaniards, and Italians, is ſo very, ſo extremely little better, that it might puzzle the moſt ſagacious connoiſſeur to pronounce which is worſt. The Engliſh, though for every kind of merit as eſtimable as any nation in Europe, are, with regard to the great majority of their individuals, juſt as unhappy as the reſt. God preſerve us! what ſtrange animals, what ſhabby Chriſtians, have had the honour to be born in the metropolis of Great Britain!—of reputable, moſt reputable parents too!—in this very London! and not to talk of Rag Fair, or Drury Lane, in the ſuperb neighbourhood of Groſvenor Square, and St. James's itſelf.

But the merit or value ſtamped upon any animal from the meridian of it's nativity, is not more fantaſtical than that which it receives from the place of it's education. Yet there are thouſands who dream that no ſcience is to be learnt but within thoſe very walls, whence after many years reſidence themſelves had come into the world with a moderate enough ſhare of erudition. It would be highly unreaſonable to reflect upon any ſchool, becauſe a great number of dunces happened to have been bred there: but people of this narrow way of thinking are really a reproach to their tutors. One would be ſorry to ſee any illiberal jealouſy riſe amongſt our univerſities for ſuch a ſimple diſpute, (a yet *tetrior quam teterrima belli cauſa*) as which of them has ſent out the moſt numerous herd of learned blockheads. For any blockhead, whoſe genius leads him to much poring over heavy volumes, may become a man of great learning in the moſt illiterate ground, in the moſt unconſecrated you can name. But for their own ſakes it is to be hoped, that thoſe learned bodies will agree to ſuppreſs all animoſities of this nature; leſt in the courſe of their altercations it ſhould be diſcovered, that all thoſe ſeminaries of learning, however dignified with the ſpecious titles of Academies, Colleges, or Univerſities, are mere artful impoſitions upon the ignorance of mankind. For there are many inſtances to prove with what ſmall helps from education good natural parts may ſhine: and a man may turn out a very conſiderable blockhead without ever having been taught metaphyſics.

As the moſt hopeful antidote to the poiſon of this very domeſtic education, one would preſcribe a viſit to foreign parts. And if, after a ramble through Europe, the obſtinate malignity ſhould ſtill ſhew itſelf in freſh eruptions, it might be worth while to try a ſeven years reſidence in America: if the patient returns before he is thoroughly cured, I can ſee no good reaſon why he ſhould not be tranſplanted for life.

But a ſtrong obſtacle to the cure of this folly, is the advantage which ſome *honeſt* people find in fomenting it. For the mob, I mean the great bulk of mankind, in judging of men, are mere botaniſts: they diſtinguiſh them only by their outward types; the claſs or tribe they belong to, or *ſeem* to belong to. For want of being able to penetrate a little deeper into the character, they prefer a man for the cock or no cock of his hat, or the healths he toaſts; and are the more obſtinate in their attachment to him, the leſs reaſon they can give for it: as the votaries of any religion are the more zealous and violent, the further it's principles are removed from common ſenſe.

To conclude, as we begun, with Religion. It is nothing to me in whom or in what any man believes. I have no objection in the world to an honeſt man, becauſe he believes in Mahomet, as long as he gives himſelf no impertinent trouble about my faith. Nay, I could live upon good terms even with a Deiſt; provided he keeps within the bounds of decency, and does not carry with him through life that juvenile vanity, which will not ſuffer him to be quiet, till he has told all the world that he laughs at thoſe things which they conſider as the moſt ſacred and inviolable.

SKETCH XVII.

OF MORAL ATTRACTION AND REPULSION.

ODERUNT HILAREM TRISTES, TRISTEMQ; JOCOSI,
SEDATUM CELERES, AGILEM GNAVUMQ; REMISSI.
HOR.

THE SULLEN HATE THE GAY, THE GAY THE SAD,
THE SLOW THE ACTIVE, AND THE QUICK THE STAID.

THIS was obſerved by one who knew mankind as thoroughly as moſt writers. And it is an obſervation that may juſtly be extended to all people of oppoſite diſpoſitions. For every knave naturally hates an honeſt man; and the dimmeſt moſt miſty blockhead has penetration enough, except you would rather call it inſtinct, to diſcover a man of parts; and cold virulence enough to deteſt him. The Miſer abhors the man who generouſly enjoys his fortune; and hopes to ſee the prodigal ſtarve. As this is the caſe, it would require ſome ſkill in the doctrine of chances, to calculate how many enemies a man of ſenſe and integrity is likely to have for one friend.

On the other hand, people of ſimilar characters are apt to like one another. There is not a genuine ruffian in Turkey, not even in Chriſtendom, ſo abandoned to all ſenſe of humanity, ſo void of all ſympathy with the human-kind, that would not take ſome little pains at leaſt to favour the eſcape of the wretch who had juſt murdered his father. Upon theſe two principles of averſion and attachment, if they are not rather, in the preſent view, one and the ſame, it is probable that the moſt important of human affairs ſometimes depend. It is perhaps more owing to this than to any ſingle cauſe beſides, that one age is ſo different from another. For a very few individuals in a nation may have influence enough to throw the great weight of it's buſineſs into ſuch hands as ſhall render it either glorious or contemptible, either miſerable or proſperous.

But it is now full time to conclude: for when the writer is tired, it is highly probable the reader muſt begin to yawn, if he is not faſt aſleep already. For which reaſons, what I had further to ſay ſhall be diſpatched in as few words as poſſible, and without any over-ſcrupulous attention to method or regularity.

SKETCH XVIII.

SENTENCES.

THE ſententious manner of writing is apt to be dry, and to give diſguſt by its oracular air, and a dogmatical over-bearing pretenſion to wiſdom. Perhaps it would be better, if it's ſeverity was alleviated with a comfortable mixture of human nonſenſe. For, to be perpetually *wiſe*, is forbidding, unſocial, and ſomething that does not become human nature, as it does not belong to it. Why ſhould a ſchool-maſter, a parſon, or an apothecary, affect to be as ſolemn and ſublime the whole year round, as if he was a ſeraph or an archangel come to *dwell amongſt us?*

The world has been ſhamefully impoſed upon by many an important fool: but no man of ſenſe ever took any pains to appear wiſe; as no honeſt man ever uſed any tricks to diſplay his own integrity.

Moſt fools, and many ſenſible people, are conceited: but people of the beſt ſenſe never are ſo.

Affectation labours with a diligence that fatigues every ſpectator, but with infallible ſucceſs, to defeat it's own purpoſe; for inſtead of creating love or admiration, it provokes our averſion and contempt. The moſt amiable people

are

are always the leaſt affected. Let us make the beſt of what Nature has done for us: ſhe may be improved, but all attempts to alter her from her original ſhape will only expoſe us to ridicule. That aukward beaſt the dromedary, as long as he has any ſenſe, will never pretend to be a Bajazet or an Othello.

I knew a poor gentleman who uſed to be grievouſly tormented with violent fits of the head ach, becauſe a celebrated poet was ſubject to that complaint. Such a head-ach I ſuppoſe as Jupiter felt juſt before he was delivered of Pallas by the rough midwifery of Vulcan's hammer; which ſeems to give a broad hint towards the cure of this kind of *Cephalalgia*, as the learned doctors delight to call it.

Affectation is the bane of every thing. An honeſt, plain, downright blockhead, ſuppoſing him at the ſame time good-natured, may not only be an uſeful but an agreeable creature. But when a blockhead is ſeized with the whim of being a fine gentleman or a wit, the Lord have mercy upon him—and us.

I am not offended at the inſipidity of Mr. Fitz Dotterell's obſervation, nor even at it's impertinence, becauſe I know he meant me no harm: what provokes me, is that he calls it a joke.

A fellow who, without a grain of wit or humour, will always be joking, is not only a diſagreeable and contemptible companion, but a dangerous one. For his aukward, unwary nonſenſe, will be apt one time or another to make him ſtumble into a quarrel; and he may loſe his friend, or perhaps his life, without the ſatisfaction of having had a good joke for it.

'T'other bottle wo'nt do—No, nor the other hogſhead neither—You great pale-eyed loggerhead, you muſt have patience—You muſt wait a good while before you rouſe Mr. Truewit's mettle—A long time indeed!—You muſt wait till your own wit begins to ſparkle—I am afraid you muſt wait till you're gone.—There is a ſecret power in your preſence enough to check every thing that's genial—You are worſe than a fog or the eaſt wind—The candles burn dim while you're here—and the Burgundy drinks as flat as Port. Good night. Here's to your good repoſe. May you ſleep like any porpus!—But hark ye, good Mr. Van Numb, before you go—You can't live without wit, it ſeems—Bleſs your fat head! are you ſure that you know wit when you hear it?—Let me be curſt if you do, even when you pore over it in print at the rate of an octavo page in an hour.

It is illiberal, inhuman, and unreaſonable in the higheſt degree, to inſult any man for his being dull: but when dullneſs pretends to genius or parts, it becomes a fair object of ridicule.

True ſatire may be called the rage of probity, and even of good-nature. It is the indignation of virtue and wit againſt vice, ill-nature, and affectation.

From wit to metaphyſics is a deſperate ſtride, yet we will venture it rather than defer our opinion of this ſcience to any future occaſion. We take metaphyſics, in the degree to which they are carried by certain philoſophers, to be *the art of talking grave nonſenſe upon ſubjects that lie beyond the reach of the human underſtanding*. Better talk about the weather ſtill; or blunder through the miſt of politics; or retail thoſe inſipid daily lies we call *news*.

I have ſeen people, that were no fools, laugh at the wrong place, and without being tickled, that they might not appear dull at taking a joke. What is worſe, I have known people, who were not quite fools neither, affect to be angry without feeling any affront; becauſe they would not be thought to want apprehenſion or ſpirit.

Vanity, beſides the ſecret pleaſure it gives one's ſelf, is a very thriving quality; and it is not politic to be at any pains to diſguiſe it, except amongſt people of the beſt ſenſe. For the generality of the world will have the ſame opinion of you that you ſeem to have of yourſelf.

Falſe or middling genius is almoſt always arrogant and vain. The true may be provoked to do itſelf juſtice; but is ſeldom apt to overvalue itſelf.

Though vanity and pride are very different things, we may talk here of that kind of pride which hurts your inferiors, and keeps thoſe at a diſtance who are never likely to abuſe your familiarity. It ſeems to be the conſciouſneſs of little minds, who are afraid of being ſeen too near. It is to be proud only where you may, with the utmoſt ſafety, be ſo; for *thoſe* proud people are almoſt always mean and ſervile to ſuch as rank above themſelves.

Now

Now that we are talking of unreaſonable animals: there is a waſpiſh fellow who muſt diſcharge his venom where he dares; and every day uſes you like a dog—becauſe he's your *couſin* truly, and may be free with you. When the wind is eaſterly this *couſin* becomes abſolutely intolerable. Perhaps, after all, he intends you no great miſchief in the main. But, in my opinion, the beſt way to manage ſuch a *couſin* is to give him a moſt inhuman threſhing. He'll bounce, and fling, and raiſe a curſed outcry; but don't ſpare him: for with Heaven's bleſſing it will do him an infinite deal of good; and make him as civil, till he begins to forget it, as the politeſt enemy you ever had the happineſs to converſe with. Beſides, you'll find a ſublime pleaſure in the exerciſe of juſt vengeance—By all that's imperial, it is a luxury almoſt too high for a ſubject!

Superficial people are always the moſt oſtentatious. I ſuppoſe you may remember that you uſed to be the fondeſt and moſt vain of the thing you were but juſt beginning to learn.

Many ſhallow people make their fortunes by the mere force of golliping. With ſome it paſſes for knowledge of the world; whereas it is only practiſing an art which, though inſupportably tedious and inſipid to men of taſte and ſpirit, inſtead of coſting *them* any trouble, is their native element; for they were born goſſips.

The blunt ſword is the truſty weapon. And there is nothing ſo infallibly ſucceſsful in all trades and profeſſions as the parts of a blockhead; plodding, ſelfiſhneſs, cunning, and impudence: which laſt virtue may be reckoned the chief of *theſe* cardinal ones; for

Nullum numen abeſt ſi ſit impudentia.

The ambition of a man of parts is often diſappointed for the want of ſome common quality, with whoſe aſſiſtance very moderate abilities are capable of making a great figure.

Some people have juſt parts enough to do their country a great deal of miſchief: for if their underſtanding was the ſmalleſt degree lower, it would be too glaringly ridiculous to employ them.

Some have died upon the ſcaffold for their faithful ſervices to their ungrateful country. You remember the ſhocking cataſtrophe of thoſe great and good men the De Wits.—By all that's ſtern and horrible! by the black-hung room! by the blood-thirſty ſaw-duſt! you're in the right—The ſureſt way to avoid ingratitude, is never to do one good thing while you live.

Many excellent geniuſes have been loſt. But we ought not to repine too much at this ſeeming inattention of Providence to human affairs; as from the ſame cauſe perhaps a much greater number of ſhocking monſters have been ſmothered and ſuppreſſed. For I am afraid there are more Neros and Caracallas than Tituſes or Trajans in private life, who want nothing but to be emperors to ſhew themſelves. Immortal gods! how many thouſand Claudiuſes *are at this hour aſleep* between Hyde Park Corner and Wapping!

I am afraid it is eaſier to corrupt good natural diſpoſitions by education and habit than to ſubdue bad ones.

There are people that were born liars; who tell you every day very ſeriouſly a parcel of inſipid unmeaning lyes, and probably believe them. It is a mere odd kind of weakneſs in them; they cannot help it; perhaps they are not ſenſible of it. Nay, I do not know whether there is not ſuch an abſurd creature as a thief that has little more ſcheme or meaning than a pilfering jackdaw.

Though there are ſtrange inconſiſtent mixtures in human nature, there never yet was a very fine underſtanding where the heart was bad.

There is a parcel of crazy worthleſs people who ſet up for wits, and bring the name of Poet under a kind of diſgrace with thoſe who do not know that there can be no true genius without a ſound underſtanding and an honeſt heart.

Some of thoſe people do more indiſcreet, irrational, abſurd things, than even nature prompts them to: ſome become ſots, and affect every thing that is indecent and ſhocking, merely that they may paſs, good God! for men of genius; and they are admitted as ſuch by the majority of their acquaintance for no other reaſon.

Oddities and ſingularities of behaviour may attend genius; when they do, they are it's misfortunes and it's blemiſhes. The man of true genius will

be

be ashamed of them: at least, he never will affect to distinguish himself by whimsical particularities.

In short, good sense is the solid foundation of all genius, and of every thing that is truly ornamental. It is necessary, in some degree, even to a good fiddler: still more so to one who composes music. A blockhead, drunk with mortal Port, might have drawled out such a pitiful strain as *God save our noble King*—or, *To Arms*, and *Britons strike Home*; but he must have had taste and genius who composed *Joy to great Cæsar*, or even *The Early Horn*.

Except Handel's Oratorio, one seldom goes to a musical entertainment where the great bulk of the pieces is not insipid. They have plenty of good music, but the performers are most provokingly frugal of the best. The reason I plainly take to be this: almost every scraper upon the violin has perhaps composed more or less music himself; and, instead of the works of the great masters, they entertain you with their own. If reading was a public entertainment; if authors were the only readers, and the choice were left to them, I suppose the great writers of former ages would soon be forgotten.

It is a question with me, whether the music of a country is to be performed, any more than it's language pronounced to perfection, but by those that have been young in it; or, what comes nearly to the same thing, have been taught it young by a native of that country.

People of the finest ear very often have not the least turn to mimickry; while, on the contrary, some of the best mimicks are mis-tuned, and have not the least ear to harmony.

It is impossible to make such a definition of wit as shall comprehend every kind of it. But it seems to consist chiefly in a happy faculty of comparing * distant objects, and surprizing you with the discovery of a striking resemblance where you did not dream of finding any.

The wit of some, who have a large share of it, is too much of one kind, and proves cloying for want of variety.

An author, who affects to be fine in every thing he says, and to write above his subject, is just as ridiculous a coxcomb as he who performs the most indifferent actions with a studied grace. And this affectation is one principal cause of the aukward unnatural language which prevails in most of our modern tragedies.

Mr. Voltaire observes very justly of some authors, that they have done themselves no good by endeavouring to be universal. It is a foolish enough piece of vanity to be sure; for it requires no great genius to write a spiritless ode, an affected epistle, an insipid satire, a flat comedy, a cold tragedy, and even a flimsy, foppish, uninteresting epic poem. Shakespeare perhaps possessed the greatest compass of genius that ever man did, and could excel in every thing, from the noblest sublime down to the burlesque.

In some ages the few people of genius ought to publish just enough to shew what they could have done in better times: more is not worth their while.

If there wants any thing besides the applause of the best judges to establish the reputation of your performance, it is the dislike of the worst. For false taste, whatever it may pretend, though it may even impose upon itself, at it's heart naturally hates true genius.

I have heard talk of an Italian who thought the soldier in Vandyke's Belisarius something quite wonderful from a Flemish painter. It would seem he had never heard of one Rubens, a native of Flanders, who, *take him for all in all*, weigh him in the nicest *balance*, is perhaps inferior to few painters that Italy has produced. True taste is always candid, and naturally delights in true genius, without ever enquiring from what soil it sprung.

I have been told, that some French Abbé, whose name I forget, pronounces, with a very decisive air, that Shakespeare understood all the passions but *love*.—Good God!—Shakespeare not understand *love!*—Who does then?--Voltaire?

Love, anger, grief, all the passions are contagious.

Love is the cause of more indiscretions in old people perhaps than in young.

Dr. Swift says, that no wise man ever wished himself younger. The dean

* In some ingenious Essays, which appeared a few years ago in one of the daily papers, wit was called *a tall faculty of the mind*. There is something odd in the expression, but the meaning is good.

might perhaps have excepted a man renowned for wiſdom, who ſeems to have been gloomy and unhappy in his latter years merely for want of youth.

Died by the ſting of a ſnail would ſound oddly in the bills of mortality. Yet I have known a woman of beauty, ſenſe, and ſpirit, in love with one of the moſt inſipid fellows that ever glared weary ſtupidity from a large dead eye. Whence it appears, that the infatuation of Queen Mab in the Midſummer Night's Dream, however extravagant it ſeems, is not quite out of nature.

As there have been many *ſmall* obſervations made upon *great* claſſics, I muſt take the liberty to venture one. Iago ends his deſcription of a good woman with

She was a wight, if ever ſuch there were—

Here he ſtops, and Deſdemona aſks, *To do what?* It does not appear what leads her to this queſtion, except you add a little word, which ſeems to have dropt out of it's place here without being miſſed.—Suppoſe it was to be read thus:

She was a wight, if ever ſuch there were,
To—

Here the buffoon pauſes, to draw the lady into the queſtion, which it is now natural for her to make; and to give, what he is ready to add, it's full effect of ſurprizing and diſappointing archly.

Iago. She that was ever fair, and never proud,
Had wit at will, and yet was never loud, &c.
— — —
She was a wight, if ever ſuch there were,
To—

Deſd. To do what?—

Iago. To ſuccle fools, and chronicle ſmall-beer.

Why do the players, in the part of Richard the Third, always ſay—'Give 'me a horſe.' It not only ſounds much better, but the meaning is, in my opinion, more warm and ſpirited as it ſtands in Shakeſpeare—

Give me another horſe—Bind up my wounds—

As I feel it, there is a kind of tame impropriety, or even abſurdity, in that action of Hamlet where he pulls out the two miniatures of his father and uncle. It ſeems more natural to ſuppoſe, that Hamlet was ſtruck with the compariſon he makes between the two brothers, upon caſting his eyes on their pictures, as they hang up in the apartment where this conference paſſes with the queen. There is not only more nature, more elegance, and dignity, in ſuppoſing it thus; but it gives occaſion to more paſſionate and more graceful action, and is of conſequence likelier to be as Shakeſpeare's imagination had conceived it.

But I beg pardon for theſe trifles: and, in hopes that you may not all be ſo ill-natured as to take me at my word, ſhall conclude with a ſcrap of Latin that has, like many others, led a weary life; though it is almoſt as inſipid a thing of the kind as ever came upon the town—

Nos hæc novimus eſſe nihil.

Which, in plain Engliſh, means no more than that—'I am ſenſible all theſe 'Sketches and Sentences are mere no-'thing,'

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.